

March 30, 2018

NEWS RELEASE

CPNRD Buys 157 Acres for Groundwater Recharge

(GRAND ISLAND, NE)- Following executive session, the Central Platte Natural Resources District's board approved a purchase agreement to buy 157.4 acres of groundwater irrigated land in the amount of \$915,000 during their monthly board meeting on Thursday. The land is located six miles southeast of Cozad, NE.

Lyndon Vogt, CPNRD general manager, said the purchase gives the NRD several options to provide recharge to the Platte River through the potential retirement of irrigated acres, transferring water from the South Side Irrigation District canal, and directly discharging flows into the river from an adjacent property. The NRD had the funds budgeted in anticipation of purchasing property to provide flows back to the river to meet requirements of the NRD's Integrated Management Plan, the Basin-Wide Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management for over-appropriated areas in the Platte River Basin, and Nebraska's New Depletions Plan.

OTHER ACTION/AGENDA ITEMS

-Airborne Electromagnetic Results Jim Cannia, AquaGeo Frameworks, gave a final report on the Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) survey saying the study provides the NRD with improved water table data and geological data. The Study will help the NRD to make determinations such as where additional wells may be drilled, where vadose zone and recharge monitoring may be needed, and where water table boundaries are located.

Airborne surveys are conducted with a helicopter and cover large areas quickly with minimal impacts to local activities and the environment. 3-D maps, produced by integrating airborne geophysics with other information, provide powerful tools for locating local features of the aquifer system important to water managers. These maps can be combined with a water table elevation map to provide the geometry of the aquifer including, locations of the most saturated thickness, heterogeneity of aquifer materials, recharge zones, lithologic barriers to groundwater flow, and connections to the surface water system.

Cannia said the survey team flew two to three flights per day at 100-150 feet above ground. The data was collected every 100 feet, providing better detail than current test-holes that provide data every six miles.

The maps also indicate where preferential flow paths may exist, which is particularly important for understanding base flow to streams and interpreting water quality samples in relation to the various stresses in the system. Ultimately, this information will be used to site wells, focused-recharge areas, facility construction, and many other areas of interest when considering the impact to the aquifer. This data will be used for the NRD's groundwater models to do predictive analysis of management scenarios.

-Monarch Habitat Project The board approved an outdoor classroom application submitted by Success Academy in the amount of \$929.75 to develop three Monarch Butterfly habitats in Grand Island. Students from Success Academy, Westridge Middle School, Knickrehm Elementary, and Skills Academy students and mentors from Rotary's Leadership Tomorrow Program will grow, design, and plant habitats at Westridge Middle School, Knickrehm Elementary, and Stuhr Museum. The goal of the three habitats is to provide an outdoor classroom space for students to engage in hand-on educational opportunities while providing shelter, food, and water for the conservation of the Monarch Butterfly.

-Outdoor Classroom & Garden The board approved an Outdoor Classroom & Garden application submitted by the Roots & Shoots Club at Barr Middle School in the amount of \$1,000. The project goal is to provide a place for students to learn about plants, insect pollinators, and how to grow vegetables. There are plans for the science and family consumer science teachers to use the area, reaching nearly 750 students each year. The Roots & Shoots Club plans to maintain the area throughout the summer.

-Urban Conservation Applications The board approved its first applications for the Urban Conservation Program. Funding was approved in the amount of \$30,000 to the City of Grand Island for picnic shelters at Sterling Park within the Sterling Estates located in northwestern Grand Island. The next development items include two picnic shelters, a basketball court, backstop, and benches. The second request approved in the amount of \$17,965 was submitted by the City of Kearney to complete a design for the Whitewater Park Recreation Plan including stream drop structures, bank stabilization, hike-bike trail connections, parklike observation area, and a new put-in ramp. The Urban Conservation Assistance Program is designed to assist sponsors establish, develop, and improve public recreational areas.

-Cooperative Hydrology Study Brandi Flyr, hydrologist, reported that the COHYST 2010 model documentation is in the final editorial stages and is expected to be completed within two months. The model documentation includes significant updates from the 2013 documentation to clearly outline the models and processes that resulted from this collaborative process. Flyr said the sponsors are developing a workplan for the next stages of COHYST. The workplan will outline specific sets of scenarios and tests to evaluate the completed integrated model and develop processes to adequately archive the data and model output files. A draft of the workplan will be discussed at the next COHYST sponsors meeting. Flyr also said the current COHYST website is being updated and relocated to a new site. The state-hosted website migration is necessary due to security and hacking concerns of all state agencies.

-Platte River Recovery Program Mark Czaplewski, biologist, reported that due to the unexpected death of Program executive director Dr. Jerry Kenny in January, the Governance Committee approved a plan designating Jason Farnsworth as Program executive director, Chad Smith as deputy director, and approved a plan to hire a director of water resources. The Program signatories all noted their appreciation for Jerry's service to the Program and expressed their gratitude for the smooth and effective transition.

Earlier this month, the Headwaters staff gave updates on Water Action Plan projects including the Cottonwood Ranch BroadScale Recharge Project, the Slurry Wall Pit pilot project planned just east of

the Cottonwood Ranch project, and the possibility of a Pathfinder Reservoir re-operation project on the North Platte River in Wyoming. Discussion also included details of the planned Program First Increment Extension. A Draft Environmental Assessment is published and under review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act. Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began on March 7 and completed in September for a Biological Opinion on the Extension. The Central Platte NRD board approved a letter of support to encourage Congressional delegations to support the necessary federal action for the Extension. Governor Ricketts is a supporter of the Extension.

-Integrated Management Plans Lyndon Vogt reported to the Water Resources Committee that there are two final meetings scheduled with stakeholders for the second increment of the Basin-Wide Integrated Management Plan. A draft plan is expected to be available in August 2018. The first 10-year increment will end in May 2019. Vogt also reported that the stakeholders for the individual Integrated Water Resources Management Plan for over and fully appropriated areas in the Platte River Basin will begin meeting soon with a draft plan expected to be available in May 2019.

-Pickup Bids The board approved the low bid of \$30,499 from Platte Valley Auto Mart of Lexington to purchase a 2018 Dodge four-wheel drive, ½ ton full-size crew cab pickup.

-Tractor Bids The board approved the purchase of a Case International 120A tractor in the amount of \$62,819 from Titan Inc. The tractor will be used for maintenance on the NRD's 40 flood control projects and dams to move rocks/dirt, erosion control, and mowing.

-Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Lyndon Vogt reported that Larry Reynolds, Tri-Basin NRD, was elected as NARD board president.

-Natural Resources Conservation Service Joe Krolikowski, district liaison, reported that NRCS recently held their FY2019 Local Work Group meeting to recommend to the NRCS State Conservationist how conservation programs would be used most effectively in their area and allows local input into how Federal dollars are spent. Krolikowski said after reviewing current cost share programs available to producers in the Central Platte, the Group recommended to continue with all the current programs available, gradually reduce some payment rates to provide more broad access to the available funds, and to look at how available funds are being allocated between funding pools to insure a good balance exists to address current resource concerns. Krolikowski also reported that the USDA-NRCS office has relocated to 703 S Webb Road, Suite C in Grand Island, NE.

-Cost-Share The board approved 25 cost-share applications in the amount of \$54,564.55 through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation and the Central Platte NRD cost-share programs for the following practices: pipeline to center pivot, center pivot incentive, streambank stabilization, grazing deferment, flow meter, tree planting, soil moisture sensor, and well decommissioning.

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